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PROTECTION OF CITY STORM DRAINS AND CATCH BASINS DURING CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

The City of Irvine, along with other Orange County cities and the County, are co-holders of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit issued by the State Water Resources Control Board. Under this permit, the City is charged with various responsibilities including requirements to raise awareness among the contracting and development community with regard to improper discharges to City storm drains, and to take enforcement action when such discharges occur.

The City storm drain system, which connects directly to local beaches and wetlands, is designed and intended to carry storm drain run-off only. To effectively deal with large and sudden volumes typical of heavy storms, numerous inlets or catch basins occur at frequent intervals along City streets. Unfortunately, it is the ready availability of catch basins that promotes their misuse.

Typical construction projects may expose the site to erosion, utilize raw materials that can be washed or blown away and generate a large amount of waste material. Further, many common construction activities utilize equipment that must be cleaned at the end of the workday. It is common practice to clean equipment in or near the street and to hose down job sites as the work progresses. Unless measures are taken to filter site run-off during construction or wash downs, construction materials and earth find their way into the storm drain system. Once in the system, these materials may either build-up and create a clog thus preventing proper functioning during a storm or end up in the ocean or wetlands as pollution and sediment.

PROPER PRACTICE AND BUILDING AND SAFETY PROCEDURE

Proper practice requires that all construction materials and waste be kept on the job site until it is used or properly disposed. Sandbags or other filtering method are required to prevent concentrated unfiltered drainage or sheet flow to cross property lines or enter into a City street. Failure to follow these practices is a violation of City ordinance punishable by fine. Further, the responsible party will be held liable for all clean up and/or clean up costs.

For larger projects, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) must be completed and filed with the Board prior to the start of construction. The SWPPP must be maintained on site for use and reference by construction personnel to ensure that all required erosion and sediment control features are implemented on site. This plan will define specific practices that must be followed and features that must be put in place and maintained throughout the project. Failure to adhere to the SWPPP is a violation of both the Federal Clean Water Act and the California Water Code and is punishable by fine.